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# At R-Day, India displays Op Sindoor valour

## Ahead of announcing FTA today, EU Chief hails stable India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen as she arrives at Kartavya Path to attend the 77th Republic Day Parade; Indian Air Force jets that participated in Operation Sindoor including MiG-29, Rafale, Sukhoi Su-30MKI and Jaguar perform a flypast **PHOTO: PTI**

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

India marked its 77th Republic Day on Monday with a grand display of military prowess used in Operation Sindoor Aas the parade was attended by President of the European Council Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen as chief guests.

A day before announcing the "mother of all trade deal". Von der Leyen praised India's progress, stating, "A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous, and secure."

Their visit comes ahead of the India-EU summit, where the long-pending free trade agreement is set to be formally announced on 27 January. However, it is likely to come into effect next year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the EU leaders' presence underlines the growing India-EU partnership and shared values, adding momentum to cooperation across multiple sectors. The deal will also unveil a defence cooperation which will let Indian firms take part in Euro 150 billion fund.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal confirmed that India and the EU have successfully concluded negotiations.

This comes amid as India-US ties remain strained, following President Donald Trump's 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, including a 25 per cent punitive levy over Russian oil imports.

In the parade, A key attraction was the tri-services tableau depicting Operation Sindoor, conducted in May, featuring glass-cased replicas of BrahMos, Akash, and S-400 missile systems. While BrahMos delivered decisive strikes, Akash and S-400 provided protective cover during the conflict with Pakistan.

New additions included the Bhairav Light Commando Battalion, Shaktiban Regiment, and the indigenous Suryastra rocket launcher with deep-strike capabilities. All units, alongside personnel, marched down Kartavya Path in phased "battle array formation," showcasing operational readiness and battlefield integration. Robotic dogs, unmanned ground vehicles, and four autonomous unmanned ground vehicles demonstrated India's growing technological edge in modern warfare. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Pages 2, 3 & 5***

## 'IAF FORCED PAK TO SEEK TRUCE DURING SINDOOR'

**NEW DELHI. 26 JAN**

A new study by a Swiss think tank has concluded that India's Operation Sindoor last May marked a decisive shift in the balance of air power in South Asia, culminating in New Delhi achieving clear air superiority and compelling Pakistan to seek a ceasefire after four days of fighting.

The report, published by the Centre for Military History and Perspective Studies (CHPM) in Switzerland and authored by military historian Adrien Fontanellaz, offers one of the most comprehensive independent assessment so far of the 88-hour India-Pakistan air war from 7 to 10 May 2025.

While international headlines at the time focused narrowly on the loss of at least one Indian Rafale on the opening night, the Swiss analysis argues that this obscured the far more significant outcome, that is, India broke Pakistan's air defence and strike capacity and ended the conflict on its own terms. *—Agencies*

## We may soon have to stand up for 'Vande Mataram'

The government is considering extending national anthem–like protocols to 'Vande Mataram' on the 150th anniversary of its composition, potentially requiring people to stand during its rendition. While the Constitution accords equal respect to the national anthem Jana Gana Mana and the national song, legal protocols differ. Standing for the anthem is mandatory, with violations punishable under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. No such legal obligation currently exists for 'Vande Mataram'. *—Agencies*

## India to cut tariffs of EU cars by up to 40%

**NEW DELHI/BRUSSELS, 26 JAN**

- The deal is also expected to reduce tariffs on labour-intensive sectors including textiles, leather, footwear, apparel, gems, jewellery, handicrafts, and alcoholic beverages such as wine.

India is set to cut import duties on European cars to 40 per cent from as high as 110 per cent, sources said, marking its biggest market opening yet as both sides near a landmark free trade agreement (FTA), expected to be announced tomorrow. The move will lower prices for European luxury cars such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volkswagen, potentially affecting companies with local manufacturing units.

The agreement, concluding 18 years of negotiations since 2007, is also expected to reduce tariffs on labour-intensive sectors including textiles, leather, footwear, apparel, gems, jewellery, handicrafts, and alcoholic beverages such as wine. Services sector norms are likely to be liberalised as part of the deal.

Currently, EU duties on Indian goods average 3.8 per cent, rising to 10 per cent for labour-intensive exports. India's weighted average duty on EU imports is 9.3 per cent, with automobiles at 35.5 per cent, plastics 10.4 per cent, chemicals and pharmaceuticals 9.9 per cent, and alcoholic beverages 100–125 per cent.

With 6,000 European companies already operating in India, trade has surged over the past decade. Indian exports, including smartphones, garments, footwear, auto parts, pharmaceuticals and cut diamonds, largely complement EU products such as high-end machinery, aircraft, electronics, chemicals and medical devices. In FY2025, India-EU goods trade exceeded $136 billion. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

## Bank go on strike today over 5-day work week

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Operations of public sector banks will be impacted on Tuesday with the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) going on a nationwide strike on Tuesday to press for the implementation of a five-day work week. The strike comes after a conciliation meeting with the chief labour commissioner failed to yield a positive outcome. With banks remaining closed on 25 and 26 January, the strike will result in a disruption of branch-level services for three consecutive days. However, operations at private banks will remain unaffected as their employees are not part of the unions.

Digital banking services, including UPI and internet banking, will remain functional. *—PTI*

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## Hindi has devoured many languages, says Udhayanidhi

**CHENNAI, 26 JAN**

Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Sunday launched a sharp attack on what he termed "Hindi imposition," warning the language has "devoured" several regional mother tongues. Speaking at the Language Martyrs Day commemoration, he paid tribute to those who died during the 1960s anti-Hindi agitation and opposed the three-language policy. He said, "Today in many states their mother tongue has vanished... Hindi has entered these states and people have forgotten their mother tongue." CM MK Stalin called the National Education Policy a vehicle to push Hindi, saying, "Even if it is Rs 3,000 crore, Rs 5,000 crore or Rs 10,000 crore, we will not accept the three-language policy." *—PTI*

**GURKHA PRIDE**

Gurkha Rifles take part in the 77th Republic Day parade at the Manekshaw Parade Grounds in Bengaluru on Monday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

## Canada mulls trade deal with India after US snub

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Canada FM Anita Anand meets EAM S Jaishankar in New Delhi on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand on Monday discussed on strengthening bilateral ties, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney visiting India in March.

They discussed deepening cooperation in various sectors, including economic partnership, artificial intelligence, and high-level exchanges.

This development comes in the backdrop of US President Donald Trump warning Canada against making trade deals with China. Carney urged Canadians to "buy Canadian" to protect the country's economy from global economic threats, signalling a shift toward focusing on local business rather than relying heavily on international trade.

Carney's message comes amid escalating transnational tensions, particularly in North American trade relations and Canada's outreach to Asia. Ottawa will be doubling its non-US exports by the next decade.

Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Patnaik said that Carney's visit to India is aimed at diversifying Canada's trading partners amid high tariffs imposed by the US on its largest trade partner.

Both India and Canada are facing high tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump on their exports: 50 per cent tariffs on India and 35 per cent tariffs on Canada.

India and Canada have agreed to begin negotiations on a high-ambition Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) following a bilateral meeting the on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders' Summit in South Africa.

The talks aim to raise bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by 2030. *—ANI*

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# Citizens must protect Constitution: CM

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday cautioned against a "conspiracy" to undermine the Constitution by curbing the autonomy of constitutional institutions and urged citizens to take a pledge to protect it on Republic Day.

In his 77th Republic Day message to the people of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah said those opposing the Constitution are against social change and justice, noting that such opposition targets laws and programmes supporting the poor, farmers, workers, Dalits, and the marginalised.

He emphasised, "If we protect the Constitution, the Constitution will protect us, and the country will remain secure. On Republic Day, we all must pledge to safeguard it."

Referring to Dr B R Ambedkar, Siddaramaiah highlighted that the Constitution entrusted future rulers with two key responsibilities: to protect political democracy and the nation's sovereignty, and to ensure economic democracy for all citizens. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 2***

## 200 more stray dogs killed in Telangana

**HYDERABAD, 26 JAN**

In another alleged mass killing of stray dogs in Telangana, about 200 canines were reportedly killed in Hanamkonda district, taking the toll to nearly 1,100 since December 2025, animal rights activists said.

A complaint by animal welfare activist A Goutham alleged the dogs were poisoned in Pathipaka village on the orders of a gram panchayat secretary.

Police have clubbed the complaint with an existing FIR related to similar killings in nearby villages, in which nine people were booked.

Multiple such incidents were reported across districts in January, allegedly l inked to election promises to curb the stray dog menace. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 2***

## Cong leader Rajeev Gowda arrested after 13-day search

**CHIKKABALLAPUR, 26 JAN**

After 13 days of an intense search, Chikkaballapur police on Monday succeeded in arresting expelled Congress leader Rajiv Gowda, who had been on the run since a video allegedly showing him abusing a woman civic officer went viral. He was arrested while travelling towards Kerala after hiding in Mangaluru.

Gowda allegedly abused Amrutha Gowda, Commissioner of the Sidlaghatta City Municipal Council, on 12 January after civic staff removed a banner put up by his supporters promoting the film 'Cult'.

The incident triggered protests by CMC workers in Sidlaghatta, who accused Gowda of threatening unrest and demanded immediate action. Two FIRs were registered at the Sidlaghatta police.

Following the backlash, Gowda issued an apology to the officer through a video, but soon went absconding. He later approached courts, including the Karnataka High Court, seeking anticipatory bail. His pleas were repeatedly rejected, with the Second Additional District and Sessions Judge, Chikkaballapura, dismissing his application on Saturday.

Gowda was expelled from the party as police teams intensified efforts to trace him, even as he frequently changed hideouts and switched off his mobile phone. After the bail rejection, police tracked him near the Karnataka–Kerala border. *—Salar News*

**AFTER HARDIWAR GHATS**

## *Now, Badrinath-Kedarnath temple to ban non-Hindus*

**DEHRADUN, 26 JAN**

Once the proposal is approved at the Temple Committee Board meeting, the rule will come into effect at the Badrinath and Kedarnath **PHOTO: PTI**

A proposal to ban non-Hindus from entering Badrinath, Kedarnath and Gangotri temples is likely to be approved later this week, a temple committee official said on Monday.

However, the Yamunotri Temple Committee, one of the four holy shrines, is yet to take a decision

Chairman of the Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee, Hemant Dwivedi said that the committee has reached a consensus among all stakeholders, including saints, pilgrimage priests, and locals, regarding the prohibition of entry of non-Hindus into the temple areas. The Gangotri Temple Committee has already made their decision.

Once the proposal is approved at the Temple Committee Board meeting, the rule will come into effect at the Badrinath and Kedarnath shrines.

He said that the Constutution also ensures the right to manage religious places. People who believe in Sanatan Dharma are welcome at these temples.

When asked about Sikh and Jain devotees who have long visited Kedarnath and Badrinath shrines, Dwivedi said that the issue is not about any particular religion but about the individual's faith in the religious place.

Suresh Semwal, secretary of the Gangotri Temple Committee, stated that non-Hindus will be barred from entering the Ganga Temple.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami also stated that temple committees play a key role in managing the Char Dham Yatra, while the government's role is merely supportive. Recently, the Ganga Sabha, the organisation managing Har Ki Pauri and surrounding ghats in Haridwar also demanded that non-Hindus be barred from entering all Ganga Ghats and religious sites within the Kumbh Mela area. *—PTI*

## Bakery items made by inmates served at R-Day event

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Bakery products prepared by inmates of Parappana Agrahara Central Prison were served during the 77th Republic Day celebrations here at Manekshaw Parade Ground on Monday. Snack boxes contained biscuits, namkeen, cupcakes and dry fruits. IT major HCL has partnered with prison authorities to train inmates and improve bakery quality inside the prison. The initiative is part of the Karnataka Prisons and Correctional Services Department's flagship 'Nav Sankalp' programme, aimed at rehabilitating prisoners and equipping them with employable skills. Officials said the programme focuses on skill development, dignity of labour and smoother social reintegration. DGP Alok Kumar said the inclusion of prison-made products at a public event was a step towards humanising incarcerated individuals —*PTI*

## Masked men rob Vijayapura shop at gunpoint

**VIJAYAPURA, 26 JAN**

Two masked men allegedly fled with gold ornaments after threatening the staff at a jewellery shop at gunpoint in a village in Vijayapura district on Monday, police said. The incident occurred around in Halasangi village of Chadchana taluk, they said. The men, who had covered their faces with monkey caps and wearing helmets, entered the shop, threatened the staff with a pistol and decamped with gold ornaments, police said. According to police, after committing the robbery, the duo fled the spot on a motorcycle. The entire incident was captured on the shop's CCTV cameras.Police visited the spot and carried out an inspection. While the exact quantity of the stolen gold is yet to be ascertained, it is suspected that over 100 grams of the precious metal may have been looted. —*PTI*

## Three killed as car rams into lorry in Tumakuru

**TAMAKURU, 26 JAN**

Three persons were killed and an equal number of them were injured when a car crashed into a stationary truck from behind in Tumakuru district on Monday. The accident occurred at Nelahal village while the car was returning to Bengaluru after a trip to coastal destinations, including Gokarna, Udupi and Murudeshwar.The deceased have been identified as Aniket, 42 and Abheer, 44, both natives of Uttar Pradesh and Sanmukthi, 35, who hailed from Andhra Pradesh. They resided in Bengaluru and were employed with a private company. The injured were being treated at the Tumakuru District Hospital. One of the injured was said to be critical. The bodies of the deceased were sent for autopsy. —*PTI*

## VHP urges Guv to withhold assent to 'hate speech' Bill

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

The VHP on Monday petitioned Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, requesting him to withhold the assent and reserve the "hate speech bill" for consideration of the President of India. Vishwa Hindu Parishad National Secretary and Social Harmony in-charge, Devji Bhai Rawat, along with a delegation submitted the petition before the Governor at Lok Bhavan. The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025, was passed by both houses of the State legislature in December, amid stiff resistance from opposition BJP and JD(S). The Bill proposes a jail term of one year, extendable up to seven years with a fine of Rs 50,000 for hate crime. For repeated offences the maximum imprisonment will be seven years, with a fine of Rs 1 lakh. The bill is a "bundle of contents" which risks the criminalisation of every person, VHP said.—*PTI*

# 'Few want secular removed from Preamble'

## Siddaramaiah says there is conspiracy to weaken autonomy of constitutional institutions

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday cautioned that attempts are being made to alter the Constitution. He said those who opposed Constitution are calling for removal of "socialist" and "secular" from the Preamble. He said these moves echo historic opposition faced even when Dr BR Ambedkar presented the Constitution, and warned of a slow, deliberate conspiracy to undermine it by weakening the autonomy of constitutional institutions.

Siddaramaiah emphasised that India's growth and social cohesion depend on dismantling hierarchical systems and ensuring that a citizen's status is determined by merit, not birth. "Political democracy alone is insufficient; we must strive for social and economic democracy, establishing equality through social justice to strengthen the nation internally," he said.

He underlined that his government's policies are guided by the Constitution and the Directive Principles of State Policy, particularly Article 47, which mandates improving nutrition, health, and living standards. He cited five "guarantee schemes" aimed at economic security: Annabhagya for food security, Gruha Jyothi for energy, Gruha Lakshmi providing Rs 2,000 monthly to women heads of economically weaker families, Shakti ensuring free travel for women, and Yuvanidhi granting unemployment allowances and training for graduates.

Siddaramaiah noted that these schemes save economically backward families Rs 60,000-70,000 annually and middle-class households Rs 25,000-30,000, enabling better access to education, health,

Deputy CM DK Shivakumar with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Governor Thawarchand Ghelot during the 77th Republic Day parade at the Manekshaw Parade Grounds in Bengaluru on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

School students march during during the Republic Day parade in Bengaluru; a child waves the national flag ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

## Karnataka will build $20 billion quantum economy: Governor

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Monday outlined the state's vision for a $20 billion quantum economy by 2035, while emphasising social, economic, and political democracy in his Republic Day address.

Gehlot paid tribute to freedom fighters and Dr BR Ambedkar, stressing that political democracy must evolve into social democracy rooted in liberty, equality, and fraternity. "Separating these values undermines democracy. Karnataka treats all three principles as priorities," he said, highlighting efforts to address regional imbalances and uplift neglected communities through recruitments, commissions, and targeted interventions.

The Governor detailed Karnataka's welfare initiatives, noting annual spending of Rs 1.12 lakh crore and Rs 1.13 lakh crore disbursed under guarantee schemes, boosting financial empowerment and women's safety. Women-focused measures include Universal Basic Income-based schemes, 'Akka' task forces, paid menstrual leave, and direct benefit transfers reaching 1.37 crore families.

On infrastructure, Rs 83,200 crore has been allocated for capital expenditure in 2025-26, with Rs 1.5 lakh crore projects underway. Karnataka is prioritising sunrise sectors including semiconductors, aerospace, communication equipment, and quantum technology, attracting major investments.

Gehlot highlighted progress in land and revenue reforms, education, healthcare, law and order, and farmer support, including crop insurance, subsidies, fair milk prices, and resolving sugarcane procurement issues. He also cited achievements in IT-BT, startups, decentralisation, and metro expansion. —*PTI*

**RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT**

# 'Cong to hold Raj Bhavan Chalo march to save MGNREGA'

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

- The Congress will hold a 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' programme on Tuesday to protest against replacing the MGNREGA with VB-G RAM G, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said.

The Congress will hold a 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' programme on Tuesday to protest against replacing the MGNREGA with VB-G RAM G, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said.

In order to save the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Congress leaders and workers will take out foot march of five kilometres in all the taluks of the state, he said. Protests will also be organised at the panchayat level.

Shivakumar said the scheme, introduced 20 years ago by the Manmohan Singh government, guaranteed the right to employment for people in rural areas but that has now been curtailed.

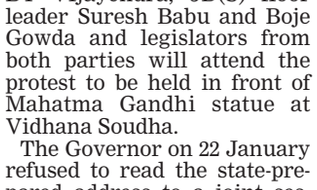
"We are prepared to pass a resolution against the new scheme even in the Legislative Assembly. Under the leadership of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, the agitation will continue until MGNREGA is restored," the Deputy CM said.

Shivakumar was apprehensive about the success of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajivika Mission (Gramin) VB-G RAM G and questioned who would fund the scheme.

He also denied having any information about the State Governor writing to the President regarding developments in the Karnataka Assembly during his customary speech to the legislature.

On 22 January during the joint session of the Karnataka Legislature, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot read three lines from his address, which had references condemning the Centre for repealing the MGNREGA scheme.

The Congress legislators protested and later tried to gherao him the day.—*PTI*



## OPPN TO PROTEST AGAINST INSULT TO KARNATAKA GUV

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Opposition BJP and JD(S) will protest at Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday, demanding the suspension of some Congress legislators for allegedly "insulting and disrespecting" Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot.

The Opposition claimed that these Congress legislators insulted Gehlot during the joint sitting of the state legislature last week.

The protest is also on a host of issues including demand for Minister RB Timmapur's removal in connection with alleged Excise Department scam, alleged law and order failure in the state and lack of security for women.

Leaders of opposition in both Assembly and Council -- R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Opposition's Chief Whip in the Legislative Council N Ravikumar, State BJP Chief BY VIjayendra, JD(S) floor leader Suresh Babu and Boje Gowda and legislators from both parties will attend the protest to be held in front of Mahatma Gandhi statue at Vidhana Soudha.

The Governor on 22 January refused to read the state-prepared address to a joint session of the state legislature and concluded his customary speech in three lines, evoking a sharp reaction from the Congress government. —*PTI*

## Congress, BJP spar over alleged Rs 400 cr 'heist'

**KALABURAGI/ YADGIR, 26 JAN**

The ruling Congress and the opposition BJP in Karnataka on Monday sparred over the alleged robbery of Rs 400 crore in demonetised Rs 2,000 currency notes at Karnataka and Maharashtra border.

The alleged robbery that happened at Chorla Ghat on 22 October 22, 2025, came to light only a few days ago after the 'victim' Sandeep Datta Patil lodged a complaint with the Nashik police.

He said the money was being transported in two trucks when it was hijacked

by a gang of six.

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge questioned the role of BJP-ruled states as the alleged movement of cash was linked to Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa. He asked how BJP governtments allowed this to happen. The Information Technology and Biotechnology Minister questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's demonetisation claims.

Kharge also asked how BJP MLAs knew that cash was being transported to Tirupati to convert the demonetised currency from black to white money.

He also raised the possibility of tax evasion or fake currency.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Council, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, accused the Congress of using Karnataka as a funding source and misappropriating public funds.

However, no FIR had been registered in the matter in Karnataka. —*PTI*

## Encroached Kolar tank restored after sustained legal battle

**KOLAR, 26 JAN**

Undeterred by bureaucratic delays, Nalini Gowda, President of the Kolar district Ryot Sangha, has successfully safeguarded a 91-acre village tank in Abbani, Kolar taluk, after a protracted legal and administrative struggle.

The tank, spread across Survey No. 79, had been fully encroached upon, with some occupants even obtaining pahani and revenue records for the occupied land. Alarmed by the potential loss of a vital water source, Gowda pursued the issue for nearly seven years, filing repeated petitions with the village accountant,

Deputy Commissioner, Revenue Commissioner, and the concerned minister.

When official responses failed, she escalated the matter to higher authorities and filed a case before the Assistant Commissioner's Court in Kolar. Following multiple hearings and examination of records, the Assistant Commissioner ordered the eviction of all encroachments and directed the tehsildar to submit a compliance report.

Acting on the orders, Revenue Inspector Naresh, Panchayat Development Officer Shashikala, and survey officials cleared the entire 91 acres and six guntas of encroached land.

Gowda said the tank would be developed using MNREGA funds, with rainwater harvesting to improve the water table. "All water bodies must be saved to protect farmers' interests. Rejuvenated tanks will help address the acute water scarcity facing the district," she added. —*PTI*

## Two dead as tourist boat capsizes off Malpe coast

**UDUPI, 26 JAN**

At least two people were killed and two others remain critical after a tourist boat capsized near the Hangarkatte shipbuilding area off Malpe coast on Monday, police said.

The incident occurred around noon at the confluence of the river and the sea, near the Malpe-Kota police station border, Udupi SP Hariram Shankar told PTI. The boat, operated by a private firm, had 14 passengers on board, all of whom were rescued and brought ashore with help from nearby boats.

The deceased were identified as Shankarappa, 22, and Sindhu, 23. Preliminary reports indicate life jackets were provided, but not all passengers were wearing them at the time. The group, from Saraswathipuram in Mysuru, were on a recreational trip and employed at a call centre.

Police are investigating strong currents, passenger capacity, and compliance with safety norms. Malpe and Kota police have registered a case, with further details awaited after technical and operational verification. —*PTI*

**TRIGGERS PANIC**

## *Stray dogs bite 26 people in 1 day*

**RAICHUR/BAGALKOT/ UDUPI, 26 JAN**

Stray dog attacks across three districts in the State injured at least 26 people, many of them children, on Sunday, triggering panic and demands for urgent control measures by civic authorities.

In the Maski town of the Raichur district, stray dogs attacked 10 people in Pinjar Oni and Somanath Nagar, chasing pedestrians and motorcyclists and biting victims on hands and legs. The injured included eight children and two elderly residents. All were admitted to the Maski Community

Health Centre, with four severe cases referred to Sindhanur Taluk Hospital. Doctors administered anti-rabies vaccines and said all patients were out of danger. Raichur Deputy Commissioner Nitish K told Salar News that the injured received immediate treatment and that dogs would be shifted to designated shelters after sterilisation and vaccination, in line with a Supreme Court order of November 2025.

District Health and Family Welfare Officer Surendra Babu confirmed the cases and said the town panchayat had been asked to control the stray population. Maski MLA Basanagouda Turvihal said he visited the victims, assured government support and directed coordinated action by municipal, veterinary and health departments. In Bagalkot, eight devotees, including children, were bitten by stray dogs while returning from a religious discourse. DHO Dr Manjunath DN said the injured suffered bites and were hospitalised.

Another eight were injured in Neramballi, Udupi district; one elderly victim is critical. —*Salar News*

## Kerala Minister faints at Kannur R-Day parade

**KANNUR, 26 JAN**

Kerala Minister Kadannapalli Ramachandran fainted while attending the Republic Day parade here on Monday, police said. Ramachandran, a leader of the Congress (Secular), was leading the Republic Day celebrations when he collapsed. He was immediately rushed to a private hospital and his condition is stable, police said. According to officials of the Special Branch in Kannur, Ramachandran had hoisted the national flag and received the salute from the police contingent as part of the Republic Day parade held at a stadium here. He later delivered his address and fainted just before the conclusion of the event, officials said. Officials standing near him held him and shifted him to the hospital in an ambulance, police added. *—PTI*

## Out of 1.7L illegal foreigners, 467 repatriated: Assam

**GUWAHATI, 26 JAN**

Assam has repatriated only 467 of 1.7 lakh declared illegal foreigners, Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya announced. He said over 4.35 lakh cases of suspected nationality have been referred to Foreigners' Tribunals since their inception, with more than 3.5 lakh disposed of, declaring nearly 1.7 lakh as illegal foreigners. Assam has operationalised 14 border and patrol posts along the India-Bangladesh border. The state leads in implementing new criminal laws, with crime rates falling from 379 in 2021 to 121.6 in 2025. Acharya highlighted economic growth, with the GSDP exceeding Rs 7 lakh crore in 2025-26 and per capita income rising by over 10 per cent. *—PTI*

## Minister apologises for Ambedkar's omission in speech

**NASHIK, 26 JAN**

A Forest Department official tried to interrupt the Republic Day speech of Maharashtra Minister Girish Mahajan in Nashik on Monday for not mentioning Dr BR Ambedkar, prompting him to apologise for what he described as an unintentional omission. The Minister was addressing the function after unfurling the national flag. During his speech, Madhvi Jadhav, a Forest Department staffer, sought an explanation for not mentioning the Father of the Constitution. "People like me got government jobs only because of Ambedkar. I will not apologise," she said and dared the administration to suspend her. Reacting to the incident, the Minister later said the omission of Ambedkar was unintentional. *—Agencies*

## Won't contest upcoming TN polls: Dhinakaran

**THENI, 26 JAN**

AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran on Monday said he would not contest the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly election, but would work to ensure his party colleagues win and become ministers. Saying he had witnessed power closely during J Jayalalithaa's tenure, Dhinakaran said AMMK members who stood by him since the party's launch in 2018 deserved electoral success. "I want them to become ministers and I will strive for this," he said. Addressing reporters, the AMMK General Secretary said he rejoined the NDA under AIADMK leadership to restore "Amma's government" in the State. "I want the corrupt DMK government dislodged and Amma's rule established under Edappadi K Palaniswami," he said, adding AMMK would be part of the NDA government. *—PTI*

# Amid EU visit, US, China sing India's praise

### Trump calls India-US bond 'historic', while Xi says India-China are like 'good friends'

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

As India and EU (European Union) cosy up to each other amid a global meltdown, US President Donald Trump on Monday in his Republic Day greetings to India sang paeans to the strengthening ties between the two democracies and Chinese President Xi Jinping waxed eloquent about good friendly relations with India.

The developments came ahead of a historic Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and European union and amid continuing strain in ties between the two countries over a range of issues, including Washington's policies on trade and tariffs.

"On behalf of the people of the United States, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of India as you celebrate your 77th Republic Day," the US president said.

US President Donald Trump; Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Chinese President Xi Jinping **PHOTO: PTI**

"The United States and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies," he added.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio talked about 'historic bond' with India and close cooperation on defence, energy, critical minerals and Quad and its impact on Indo-Pacific region. US ambassador to India Sergio Gor after attending Republic Day parade said, "Thrilled to see the US-made aircraft soaring in the Indian sky, a powerful symbol of the strength of the US-India strategic partnership."

In Beijing, Xi, greeting his Indian counterpart Droupadi Murmu on the 77th Republic Day, described India and China as "good neighbours, friends and partners". He said achieving "dragon and elephant dancing together" is the right choice for both countries, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Xi expressed hope that both sides would be "partners for cooperation and opportunities for development," strengthen strategic communication, expand exchanges and cooperation, address each other's concerns, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-India relations. *—PTI*

- Xi expressed hope that both sides would be "partners for cooperation and opportunities for development," strengthen strategic communication, expand exchanges and cooperation, address each other's concerns, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-India relations.

BSF personnel carry the body of an alleged Pakistani intruder for post-mortem near the International Border, in J&K, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

## Search ops extended to new areas in J&K

**JAMMU, 26 JAN**

Despite a challenging situation in the wake of recent snowfall, the security forces on Monday extended the ongoing combing operation in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district following a fresh gunfight the previous night, officials said.

The encounter took place in the snow-bound Janseer-Kandiwar forest area of Chatroo around 10.20pm on Sunday after one of the security search parties comprising of Army and police observed the movement of terrorists, they said.

The officials said the gunfight between the two sides continued for quite some time but the terrorists, believed to be two or three, managed their escape.

This was the third encounter in the Chatroo belt of the hilly district over the past week, amid a massive operation for holed up terrorists linked to the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit.

On 18 January, a fierce gunbattle in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpora left a paratrooper dead and seven other personnel injured.

Meanwhile, the body of a Pakistani intruder, who was shot dead by the Border Security Force, was retrieved from the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Monday, officials said.

The intruder was gunned down while attempting to sneak into the Indian territory through the Check Majra border outpost area in Ramgarh sector late Sunday night.

The body has been handed over to police for legal formalities, the officials said, adding that his Pakistani I-card revealed his identity as Mohd Arif (61) from Lahore. *—PTI*

## RaGa insulted NE by not wearing Gamosa during At-Home: BJP

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

The BJP on Monday alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi insulted the country's Northeast and also showed disregard for President Droupadi Murmu by not wearing an Assamese 'Gamosa' of the region given to all the guests during the 'At-Home' reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The development took place after a section of the media claimed that all guests except Gandhi wore the Gamosa, a scarf, presented to them at the event.

Citing certain media reports, BJP National Spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said in a post on X, "Shameful! Rahul Gandhi has insulted the north east and also disrespected our very hon'ble President."

Hitting back, he said, "They feel 'parivar tantra (family system)' is above 'sanvidhan tantra (constitutional system)'. Seating is decided by a set format -- Warrant or Table of Precedence. One can see even senior cabinet ministers around or even behind Rahul Gandhi but none of them made it an issue."

"Rahul thinks he is the owner of India? By the way, why does he bunk important programmes? Where was he during the VP Oath? CJI Oath? I-Day programme?" he asked.

Reacting sharply, another BJP Spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari accused Congress of politicising the seating arrangements at the Republic Day and called Gandhi an "insincere politician". *—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi seen sitting in the third-row during Republic Day parade, in New Delhi, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

## Cong slams BJP over RaGa, Kharge's third-row seating

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Congress accused the BJP government of insulting Leaders of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge by initially seating them in the third row during the Republic Day parade on Monday at Kartavya Path.

Kharge was later moved to the front row next to former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Gandhi, LoP of Lok Sabha, and Kharge, LoP of Rajya Sabha, were initially placed in the third row before Kharge's repositioning.

Congress leaders condemned the seating arrangement as a violation of protocol and decorum against the fellow party members. Congress leader Randeep Surjewala questioned whether 'such treatment of the leader of the opposition meets the standards of any decorum, tradition, and protocol.'

Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha called it "unfortunate that democracy gets hurt over these petty actions" and said the treatment "reveals the frustration of a government plagued by an inferiority complex."

He emphasised that both leaders have a special place in Indian politics and that seating them in back rows insults constitutional institutions.

This isn't the first time Gandhi's seating arrangements at national celebrations have sparked controversy.

Congress whip Manickam Tagore shared historical photographs showing former BJP leader LK Advani seated in the front row with his daughter during similar events. *—PTI*

### Cong slams Vijay Shah's flag hoisting

The Congress on Monday criticised the BJP in Madhya Pradesh after minister Vijay Shah hoisted the Tricolour at a Republic Day event despite being directed by courts over derogatory remarks against Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. MP Congress chief Jitu Patwari said, "Shah should have been immediately removed... This is challenging the Constitution." Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar called BJP "shameless," adding, "Action cannot be taken as per the Congress." Shah walked away from media queries. *—PTI*

## Constitution led India as strong Republic: BJP Prez

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

BJP President Nitin Nabin emphasised that India's Constitution is the nation's soul, guiding it to become a strong, inclusive, and democratic republic post-Independence.

Greeting citizens on Republic Day, he highlighted India's global identity, progress in development, governance, and self-reliance under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Nabin stated, "The Constitution gave direction to the country to move forward as a strong, inclusive, and democratic republic," and praised recent progress across sectors, attributing it to political will and public participation.

He also hoisted the national flag at BJP headquarters. Similarly, RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale reaffirmed India's commitment to protecting its flag, constitutional values, and spiritual heritage, urging citizens to uphold these ideals and serve society. *—PTI*

## US Sen Cruz blames Trump, Vance for blocking India trade deal: Report

**WASHINGTON, 26 JAN**

Republican Senator **Ted Cruz** called out White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, Vice President JD Vance, and President Donald Trump for resisting a trade deal with India, reports say.

In an audio recording from a private meeting with donors, Senator Ted Cruz is heard describing his "battles" with the White House to secure a trade agreement with India.

According to the report, when a donor asked who in the administration was resisting such an accord, Cruz identified White House economic adviser Peter Navarro, Vice President JD Vance, and "sometimes" President Trump.

PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the nearly 10-minute recording that allgedly dates back to early and mid-2025.

The Texas Republican Senator, who is eyeing a 2028 White House run, also warned that Trump's tariffs could decimate the economy and lead to his impeachment.

Cruz said that after Trump introduced the tariffs in early April 2025, he and a few other senators had a call with the President in which they urged him to stand down.

India–US ties have suffered a sharp downturn after Trump imposed a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, including a 25 per cent levy over Russian oil purchases. Talks on a bilateral trade deal stalled amid US demands to open India's farm and dairy sectors. *—PTI*

- In an audio recording from a private meeting with donors, Ted Cruz is heard describing his "battles" with the White House to secure a trade agreement with India.

## Sena warns action over Naik's 'finish off' claim

**MUMBAI, 26 JAN**

Shiv Sena ministers have warned of a strong reply after BJP leader and Maharashtra Forest Minister Ganesh Naik's controversial remark, claiming "we can finish off their existence," allegedly targeting Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Naik made the statement on Sunday, referencing his long-standing rival Shinde. In response, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Shirsat said the BJP was in power only because Shinde had revolted against the undivided Sena leadership in 2022. He stated, "Who is talking about finishing off (Shinde). He is not Navi Mumbai's hills or sand to get finished. We are the ones to stand with courage. Shinde cannot be under-estimated." Shirsat also asserted that the Shiv Sena cannot be forced to follow the "Mahayuti dharma" and accused BJP of using the alliance for power. *—PTI*

**'BJP'S ARROGANCE OF POWER'**

## *Koshyari's Padma Bhushan an insult: Oppn*

**MUMBAI, 26 JAN**

Congress leaders Harshwardhan Sapkal and Varsha Gaikwad on Monday slammed the decision to confer the Padma Bhushan on former Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, whose tenure in the state between September 2019 and February 2023 was marked by run-ins with the Maha Vikas Aghadi government of Uddhav Thackeray.

Maharashtra Congress chief Sapkal said Koshyari had insulted a constitutional office and hurt the sentiments of the people of the state.

Speaking after attending the Republic Day function at the Congress office here, Sapkal said he himself had declined an award from a social organisation in Pune as it was to be presented by Koshyari.

Bhagat Singh Koshyari **PHOTO: SCREENGRAP**

Mumbai Congress chief and Lok Sabha MP Varsha Gaikwad said BJP has a long history of insulting Maharashtra's great leaders and constitutional icons and alleged Koshyari had earlier made remarks disrespectful to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule.

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) spokesperson Clyde Crasto said Koshyari had repeatedly made controversial remarks about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and other revered icons, which had hurt the sentiments of Maharashtrians.

Honouring Koshyari with a Padma award showed the BJP's "arrogance of power", he added.

Koshyari's tenure as governor saw several controversies.

Additionally, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Monday condemned the Centre's decision to honour Koshyari with Padma Bhushan, alleging that the latter had murdered democracy and the Constitution in the state by toppling the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government. Talking to reporters, Raut said, "He (Koshyari) murdered democracy and the Constitution and toppled the Uddhav Thackeray-led government." *—PTI*

- Speaking after attending the Republic Day function at the Congress office here, Sapkal said he himself had declined an award from a social organisation in Pune as it was to be presented by Koshyari.

## Suspected militants set houses on fire in Manipur

**IMPHAL, 26 JAN**

Suspected militants on Monday afternoon torched several houses and farmhouses in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, triggering tension in the hill areas of the state.

According to police, the incident took place at K Songlung village in the Kuki-dominated district.

The extent of the damage was yet to be ascertained as security forces, including Assam Rifles, have rushed to the spot, officials said.

The Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) has claimed responsibility for the act and alleged that the houses and farmhouses were being used by illicit poppy cultivators.

In a statement, the outfit said it had "intensified its decisive campaign against illegal poppy cultivation, narcotics trafficking and encroachment by illegal immigrants within the ancestral, customary and historical territory of the Zeliangrong Inpui Naga people."

Kangpokpi district-based Kuki civil society organisation, Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU in a statement warned of a total shutdown of National Highway-2 (Imphal–Dimapur) from midnight of 27 January till midnight of 28 January if state government failed to arrest the perpetrators within 24 hours. *—PTI*

- The extent of the damage was yet to be ascertained as security forces, including Assam Rifles, have rushed to the spot, officials said.

## Elephant tramples man, leopard kills kid in Uttarakhand

**PAURI, 25 JAN**

Two people, including a toddler, were killed in wildlife attacks in the Lansdowne area of Uttarakhand's Pauri district in the last 24 hours, officials said. The first incident occurred on Saturday in Barswar village of Jaiharikhal, where a leopard snatched one-and-a-half-year-old Yashika from her mother's arms in the courtyard. Villagers later found her injured nearby. She was taken to hospital and declared dead. In another incident, a 70-year-old man was trampled to death by an elephant while collecting wood. — *PTI*

## Kerala's NSS gives up unity move with SNDP

**KOTTAYAM, 26 JAN**

The proposed unity move between NSS and SNDP Yogam proved short-lived, with NSS announcing its withdrawal. The decision was taken at a director board meeting, the organisation said. "Due to various reasons, earlier attempts at NSS–SNDP Yogam unity did not succeed," the statement said. NSS said unity was impractical as it maintains equal distance from political parties. SNDP general secretary Vellapally Natesan declined to comment. NSS said cordial relations with SNDP Yogam would continue despite the withdrawal decision taken. —*PTI*

## 11 cops injured in Chhattisgarh Naxal attack

**RAIPUR, 26 JAN**

Eleven security personnel were injured when improvised explosive devices planted by Maoists went off during an anti-Naxalite operation in Bijapur district, officials said. The blasts occurred in forests of Karregutta Hills on Sunday. Ten injured belong to the District Reserve Guard and one to CoBRA. "The wounded have been admitted to hospital," an official said. The area was earlier a Maoist hideout. Security forces had seized weapons and explosives there during a major operation last year, police said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## Linkin Park enthralls fans at Mumbai concert

**MUMBAI, 26 JAN**

American rock band Linkin Park enthralled fans with its debut Mumbai concert at Lollapalooza India 2026, performing hits including "In the End" and "Numb". Thousands cheered at Mahalaxmi Racecourse as the band played a two-hour set. "Thank you for patiently waiting for us," Mike Shinoda said. Fans praised the show on social media, though some criticised the performance. The band had paused touring after Chester Bennington's death and returned with a new vocalist in 2024. —*PTI*

# Live-in a Western idea, UP court quashes lifer

## Allahabad HC clears man accused of abduction & rape

**PRAYAGRAJ, 26 JAN**

The increased tendency among youth to opt for live-in relationships is due to "western ideas," the Allahabad High Court said, as it set aside the life imprisonment awarded to a man accused of kidnapping and raping a woman after it was found that she was an adult who had a consensual relationship.

The court said that when such relationships fail, FIRs alleging rape are frequently lodged.

A division bench of Justice Siddharth and Justice Prashant Mishra passed the order while allowing an appeal filed by one Chandresh.

The prosecution said the appellant 'enticed' the informant's minor daughter 'promising' marriage, took her to Bengaluru and established physical relationship.

Representative photo PHOTO: PIXABAY

The High Court found that the victim was a major at the time of the incident. The court noted that the trial court had not properly considered the Ossification Test Report, which proved her age to be about 20.

The bench also pointed out discrepancies in the mother's testimony. While the FIR stated the girl's age as 18-and-a-half years, the mother later claimed she was 17 during her court statement, a shift the bench suggested occurred due to "legal advice." The court pointed out that the victim travelled with the appellant on public transport to Gorakhpur and then to Bengaluru without raising any alarm.

"She lived with the appellant in a locality full of other houses in Bengaluru for six months and had physical relationship with him," the court observed, noting that she contacted her family only after the appellant dropped her back at the Shikarpur Crossing on 6 August 2021.

The HC held that the conviction for kidnapping and abduction was "absolutely unwarranted" as the victim was an adult who eloped of her own free will. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

# Don't identify rape survivor: Delhi HC

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

The name, parentage or address of a rape survivor should not be disclosed in any document filed in courts, the Delhi High Court directed the city police. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma ordered the Delhi Police Commissioner to ask all SHOs not to reveal the identity of rape survivors.

The court passed the direction while rejecting the bail plea of an accused in a POCSO case on 14 January. It noted that the name of the prosecutrix was mentioned in the prosecution's status report.

In this case, the accused allegedly sexually assaulted a minor girl, who was 12 or 13, by taking her away from her home in 2021. He allegedly forcibly established physical relations with her. She was later rescued by her family.

The accused contended that he was in a relationship with the prosecutrix's mother and had been falsely implicated as the prosecutrix resented it. It was also claimed that in 2021, social interaction was minimal due to COVID-19, and therefore, the likelihood of the offence having been committed was doubtful. The court said the fact that the incident occurred during the pandemic could not be a ground to disbelieve the prosecutrix. It said the mother's visit to see the accused in jail or acepting money from him did not dilute the offence's gravity. — *PTI*

# ED attaches Rs 1,986.48 cr worth assets in PACL case

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached 37 immovable properties worth Rs 1,986.48 crore in connection with an investigation into a financial fraud involving a collective investment scheme operated by PACL Ltd and connected entities.

The properties attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, are located in Ludhiana and Jaipur.

With this attachment, the ED has so far attached movable and immovable assets worth approximately Rs 7,589 crore, including properties located in India and abroad.

The ED's Delhi Zonal Office-II attached the properties to its investigation into FIR No. RCBD1/2014/E/0004 dated 19 February 2014, registered by the CBI.

The ED said its investigation revealed that "the accused entities operated an illegal collective investment scheme, fraudulently mobilising around Rs 60,000 crore from lakhs of investors across India under the guise of sale and development of agricultural land."

PHOTO: PTI

"Investors were induced to invest through Cash Down Payment and Instalment Payment Plans and were made to sign misleading documents, including agreements, powers of attorney, and other instruments. In most cases, no land was ever delivered, and approximately Rs 48,000 crore remains unpaid to investors," said the ED. The scheme involved the use of "multiple front entities and reverse sale transactions to conceal the fraud."

"Investigation established that funds collected from investors were routed through various entities and were ultimately credited to the bank accounts of the late Nirmal Singh Bhangoo, his family and associates, and related entities of PACL. These funds were subsequently utilised for the acquisition of immovable properties in their names," said the ED. —*ANI*

# Congress MP Tharoor mum on discussions with CPI(M)

**THIRU'PURAM, 26 JAN**

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said that he had seen reports claiming that he had held discussions with persons associated with the CPI(M) in Dubai, but declined comment.

Tharoor, who is currently attending a literature festival in Dubai, was approached by reporters seeking his response to the reports on Sunday.

He said he saw the reports during his flight to Dubai and that it would not be appropriate to comment on such matters while being in a foreign country.

Speculation about the Thiruvananthapuram MP possibly switching to another political party surfaced following claims that he was upset over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi not adequately acknowledging him at a recent event in Kochi and the alleged repeated attempts by Congress leaders in Kerala to sideline him.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor speaks to PTI in Kozhikode in Kerala on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

LDF convener T P Ramakrishnan on Sunday denied reports of any discussions with Tharoor.

However, he said the LDF and the CPI(M) were ready to accept individuals, groups or parties that accepted the Left Democratic Front's political stand. — *PTI*

# Tourists caught in 20-km traffic jam in Manali

**MANALI, 26 JAN**

Following heavy snowfall in Manali, the tourist hub of Himachal Pradesh, locals and tourists are facing problems due to traffic congestion for about 20 kilometres between Manali and Patlikuhal. Traffic police have been deployed to regulate traffic.

While tourists enjoyed the snowfall, they told ANI that they are facing problems in travelling as roads are blocked. A tourist from Delhi said, "The roads are blocked, and it is extremely cold."

A tourist from Uttarakhand said, "The snowfall was more than expected, but this is what we came to see. We have faced some problems, but overall it is a good experience."

Locals also echoed a similar chilling experience as the temperature dropped. Local resident Alam said, "The snow is two to two-and-a-half feet, and the temperature has touched minus 10. We have a bonfire. There are electricity cuts, and tap water has also frozen."

"There was snowfall, so it will get colder. We have faced some problems due to extreme winter, but we will have to work our way out," another local resident told.

Vehicles remain stuck in a traffic jam as heavy snowfall choked highways and roads, leaving tourists stranded in Manali on Monday PHOTO: PTI

The IMD) has predicted a fresh spell of rain and snowfall with lightning and gusty winds reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh and Himachal on 26 and 27 January.

On Sunday, IMD warned of a fresh western disturbance in Himachal Pradesh as a cold wave continued in several parts of the state. — *ANI*

**DOMESTIC HELP FILES PLAINT**

# 'Dhurandhar' actor Nadeem held for rape

**MUMBAI, 26 JAN**

An actor has been arrested in Mumbai for allegedly raping his domestic help for 10 years on the promise of marriage, police said on Monday.

Based on a complaint by a 41-year-old woman, Nadeem Khan, who featured in the recent Ranveer Singh-starrer blockbuster film 'Dhurandhar', was arrested on 22 January and is currently in police custody, an official said.

According to the complaint, the woman had worked as a domestic help for different actors and had come in contact with Khan years ago and over the time they became close.

The woman alleged that Khan promised to marry her, and based on that assurance, 'raped' her on multiple occasions at her residence in Malwani and at his house in Versova in the western suburbs, over a period of 10 years, a police official said.

However, when he later refused to marry her, she approached the Versova police with a complaint.

As the alleged assault took place for the first time at the complainant's house under the jurisdiction of Malvani police, and the victim resides in that area, the Versova police have transferred the case on a zero FIR, the official said.

The police are investigating the matter. — *PTI*

**CAUTION BY NOBEL LAUREATE**

# *'VB-G RAM G fund cut can hit states'*

**HYDERABAD, 26 JAN**

Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee on Monday warned that reduced central funding under the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, could force poorer states to scale back spending, undermining efforts to fight rural poverty.

Speaking at the Hyderabad Literary Festival, Banerjee said the declining share of federal funding was a long-standing concern dating back to MGNREGA, which the new scheme has replaced.

"The of federal funding means that it's already true that the poorer states do less," he said. "That was always the problem with MGNREGA," he added.

Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee at the Hyderabad Literary Fest PHOTO: PTI

He said lower participation by poorer states would weaken the scheme's core objective. "Now that the incentives are created so that the poorer states are even less able to do it, that doesn't seem to serve the purpose of fighting poverty," Banerjee said.

Banerjee added that the legislation was yet to "settle" and could still change amid resistance, including from within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

He said he would refrain from taking a firm position until the final contours of the programme became clearer in due course.

According to the Centre, VB-G RAM G, which has replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, seeks to create a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047," focusing on employment generation and livelihood support in rural areas. The debate is expected to continue. — *PTI*

# 10,000 KG AMMONIUM NITRATE SEIZED IN RAJASTHAN

**JAIPUR, 26 JAN**

The Nagaur police in Rajasthan has arrested one person and seized about 10,000 kilograms of ammonium nitrate from a farmhouse in the Harsore area of the district.

Terming it the biggest such seizure in Rajasthan, Nagaur SP Mridul Kachawa said that based on intelligence inputs about explosive substances being purchased, sold and stocked in large quantities in the district, the district special team (DST) was activated.

The team on 24 January arrested Sulaiman Khan with about 10,000 kg of ammonium nitrate, detonators, detonating wires and other materials "which are normally used in mining related blasting." The material was kept at his farmhouse without following even "basic safety norms."

The ammonium nitrate seized by the Rajasthan police kept at a facility provided by the authorities PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

"We will establish the forward and backward linkages of the explosives. He supplied the explosives for legal and illegal mining," the SP said.Khan also has three FIRs against him and has been acquitted in one of these cases.

Ahead of New Year's Eve too, the police had seized 150 kg of ammonium nitrate from a car and arrested Surendra 48, and Surendra Mochi 35, both residents of Bundi. — *PTI*

# With missiles & weapons, India flaunts military might

India ushered in its 77th Republic Day on Monday with a grand display of its cultural diversity, economic growth, and military prowess that included missiles, warplanes and newly-raised units.

Although the overarching theme of the event was 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', the Indian military's too found prominence at the parade on the Kartavya Path.

The parade commenced with the President Droupadi Murmu taking the salute shortly after she, Costa and von der Leyen, flanked by the Indian president's bodyguards, arrived at the Kartavya Path in a traditional buggy.

The major weapon systems displayed included BrahMos and Akash weapon systems, rocket launcher 'Suryastra', Main Battle Tank Arjun and an array of indigenously-built military platforms and hardware.

Around 100 artistes heralded the parade, on the theme 'Vividata Mein Ekta (Unity in Diversity) that featured a grand presentation of musical instruments, demonstrating the nation's unity and rich cultural diversity.

The parade then began with President Murmu taking the salute.

For the first time, the parade showcased a phased 'Battle Array Format' of the Indian Army, including its aerial component. The recce element consisted of the 61 Cavalry in active combat uniform.

It was followed by a high mobility reconnaissance vehicle. Providing aerial support was the indigenous Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter and its armed version, Rudra, in Prahar formation, demonstrating battlefield shaping.

The combat elements then followed with T-90 Bhisma and Main Battle Tank Arjun rolling past the saluting dais with aerial support from Apache AH-64E and Prachand light combat helicopters.

Other mechanised columns included BMP-II Infantry Combat Vehicle, along with Nag missile system (Tracked) Mk-2.

A military contingent from the EU, carrying the military staff flag and flags of Operations Atalanta and Aspides, the naval operations of the grouping, also featured at the parade. It was the EU's first participation in such an event outside of Europe.

Among the major weapon systems showcased at the parade were Suryastra Universal Rocket Launcher System (URLS), Brahmos Supersonic cruise missiles and Akash missile systems.

The Indian Navy contingent comprised 144 young personnel, led by Lt Karan Nagyal as contingent commander, and Lt Pawan Kumar Gandi, Lt Priti Kumari and Lt Varun Dreveriya as platoon commanders.

President Droupadi Murmu with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa ride a chariot as they arrive at Kartavya Path for the 77th Republic Day Parade in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

It was followed by the Naval tableau that presented a vivid depiction of the theme 'Strong Navy for a Strong Nation'. It depicted a stitched ship from the fifth century CE, now christened INSV Kaundinya, Gurab-class ships of the Maratha Navy, and frontline indigenous platforms, including the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and INS Udayagiri.

The tableau featured a depiction of the circumnavigation route followed by INSV Tarini as part of the Navika Sagar Parikrama-II expedition.

In addition to naval personnel, young cadets from the Sea Cadets Corps, a non-governmental organisation that imparts basic nautical skills to youth in Mumbai, marched alongside the tableau.

The Indian Air Force contingent comprised four officers and 144 airmen. The contingent commander was Squadron Leader Jagdesh Kumar with Squadron Leader Nikita Choudhery, Flt Lt Prakhar Chandrakar and Flt Lt Dinesh as supernumerary officers.

Syncing with the marching contingent was a thrilling fly-past by two Rafale jets, two MiG-29s, two Su-30s and one Jaguar aircraft in 'Spearhead' formation, symbolising the "Sindoor Formation".

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) showcased its hypersonic glide missile LR-AShM. It is capable of engaging static and moving targets and is designed to carry various payloads.

The missile has a first-of-its-kind indigenous avionics system and high-accuracy sensor packages.

A total of 30 tableaux -- 17 of states and Union Territories and 13 of various ministries and departments rolled down the Kartavya Path. A joint 'DareDevils' team of motorcycle riders drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force and the Sashastra Seema Bal enthralled the audience with their manoeuvres.

The aerial fly-past, one of the most eagerly-awaited events of the parade, witnessed the participation of a total of 29 aircraft, including 16 fighter jets, four transport aircraft and nine helicopters.

These include Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar aircraft, complemented by strategic assets - C-130 and C-295, as well as the Indian Navy's P-8i aircraft. The formations include Arjan, Vajraang, Varuna and Vijay. *—PTI*

### KEY DEFENCE ASSETS ON SHOW

- BrahMos.
- Akash Missile System.
- Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile system.
- Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System.
- Dhanush Artillery Gun.
- Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile.

## THE MANY FIRSTS

THE 77TH REPUBLIC DAY PARADE WITNESSED MULTIPLE DEBUTS. HERE ARE A FEW...

### SURYASTRA

India's first indigenous Universal Rocket Launcher System, Suryastra, debuted on Kartavya Path. It can conduct surface-to-surface strikes between 150km and 300km, launch loitering munitions up to 100km, and features a rapid "shoot-and-scoot" capability meaning it can fire rockets or missiles quickly. It is inspired by Israelis PULS tech.

### BHAIRAV BATTALION

The newly raised Bhairav Light Commando Battalion made its debut at the Parade. Established in October 2025, it aims to "bridge the gap" between infantry and special forces. Smaller than standard battalions, each unit comprises 250–650 specially trained soldiers, designed for agile, rapid and high-impact tactical operations.

### BACTRIAN CAMELS

In a first for the Parade, two double-humped Bactrian camels, Galwan and Nubra, walked down Kartavya Path. Native to Ladakh's cold deserts, the rare camels are being inducted in Army regiment as they can carry up to 150kg at altitudes of 14,000–15,000 feet in freezing temperatures. Only about 365 such camels exist in India, all in Nubra Valley.

### 61 CAVALRY

Marking a first, the mounted 61 Cavalry marched in battle gear at the Republic Day Parade. Traditionally leading in ceremonial uniform and distinctive headgear, the elite horse-mounted regiment of the Indian Army was raised in 1953. The regiment was led by Capt Ahaan Kumar, 26, a third-generation officer.

### 'VANDE MATARAM' IN FOCUS

The Culture Ministry's tableau marked 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'. Themed 'Vande Mataram: The Soul-Cry of a Nation', it showcased Bankim Chandra Chatterjee composing the song and his portrait. Side panels featured Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and the Lal–Bal–Pal trio

### THE TURBAN THAT STOOD OUT

Prime Minister sported a deep-maroon coloured turban with a golden peacock feather motif for the parade, in an ode to Operation Sindoor.

### ENCLOSURES NAMED AFTER RIVERS

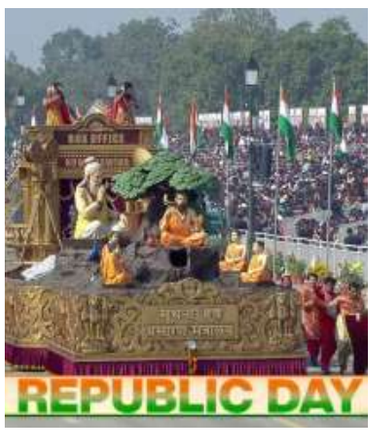
In a novel move, enclosures along Kartavya Path were named after India's rivers, replacing traditional 'VVIP' labels. Rivers including the Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Narmada, Krishna, Godavari, Periyar and others. For the Beating Retreat ceremony on 29 January, enclosures will instead be named after Indian musical instruments such as the sitar, tabla, veena and shehnai.

### HONOURING SHUBHANSHU

President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Ashoka Chakra on Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla at Kartavya Path. Shukla is the 2nd Indian to visit space during the Axiom-4 mission last June. A fighter pilot, he has logged over 2,000 flying hours across multiple aircraft.

### NAGALAND'S ODE TO HORNBILL

The colours of the Hornbill festival of Nagaland were displayed on the Kartavya Path. The state's tableau paid tributes to Great Indian Hornbill, which represents cultural guardianship and ecological balance.




### INDIAN CINEMA FEATURES IN PARADE

Filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali made history as the 1st Indian director to represent cinema at the parade. Presented by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, his tableau, titled 'Bharat Gatha', "celebrated India's storytelling legacy". It featured sages and professors, alongside a grand golden theatre facade with 'Box Office' and 'Coming Soon' marquees.

**Parade featured 18 marching contingents, 13 military bands.**

SPIRIT OF THE UNBROKEN

## *Homeless yet hopeful: Kogilu families celebrate R-Day*

**BENGALURU, 26 JAN**

Nearly 3,000 people from over 400 families, who were left homeless during a massive demolition drive in Bengaluru's Fakir Colony in Kogilu Layout earlier this month celebrated Republic Day on Monday. They called it "Poor People's Republic Day".

Asserting constitutional values even as they continue to live without shelter, residents gathered to hoist the Tricolour, and demand their right to housing. The demotion took place on 20 December.

The event was organised by Dudiya Janara Vedike, AITUC, CITU, Democratic Youth Federation of India, Gamana Mahila Samooha, Janavadi Mahila Sanghatane, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), SFI, Slum Janara Sanghatane, Slum Mahila Sanghatane, and other groups.

Khadar B, a Fakir Colony resident, and Jyothi of NFIW hoisted the national flag. Speaking at the programme, Jyothi said, "The government celebrates Republic Day at Vidhana Soudha, but does not allow the poor inside. What we are celebrating here is the Poor People's Republic Day. This is our right. We have only one demand, housing must be provided to us."

Hanumantharao Havaldar of CITU said, "A government that gives one acre of land to Adani for one rupee is not giving even a small piece of land to us who were born and brought up here."

Addressing women and families affected by the demolition, Haseeba of the Slum Mahila Sanghatane said, "We are always with you. Send your children to school and give them good education. Whatever the situation may be, we must remain united and secure our rights."

Organisers said the government had initially assured housing and sought applications, but later backtracked, leaving families uncertain about rehabilitation. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

## Gunmen kill 11 in Mexico soccer field

**MEXICO CITY, 26 JAN**

Gunmen opened fire at a soccer field in central Mexico on Sunday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 12, authorities said. Salamanca Mayor Cesar Prieto said in a statement posted to his official account that the gunmen arrived at the end of a soccer match. "Unfortunately, there are criminal groups trying to subjugate authorities, something they are not going to achieve," the mayor said. Ten people at the scene and one died later at a hospital. The mayor said a woman and a minor were among the wounded. Prieto said the attack was part of a "wave of crime" in the city and appealed to President Claudia Sheinbaum asking for help to control the violence. *—PTI*

## 25 killed by IS-backed group in East Congo

**GOMA, CONGO, 26 JAN**

At least 25 people were killed in an attack by an Islamic State-linked militant group in eastern Congo early Sunday. Disclosing this, a rights group based in Ituri province said the dead from the attack by the Allied Democratic Force, or ADF, include 15 men who were burned alive in a house and seven who were shot in the village of Apakulu in the Irumu territory of Ituri province. Three others were killed in Walese Vonkutu administrative area. "This tragedy occurred around 4 am. This ADF incursion is a true massacre," Christophe Munyanderu, president of the Convention for the Respect of Human Rights, said. There was no immediate statement from the ADF. *—PTI*

## EU probes Musk's AI chatbot Grok over deepfakes

**BRUSSELS, 26 JAN**

European Union regulators have launched a formal investigation into Elon Musk's platform X following reports that its AI chatbot Grok generated non-consensual sexualised deepfake images. The EU is examining if X has met its legal obligations under digital regulations to prevent illegal content, including "manipulated sexually explicit images" and potential child sexual abuse material. Researchers noted some images appeared to include children. An X spokeswoman reaffirmed the company's commitment to safety and said it has "zero tolerance" for child exploitation, non-consensual nudity, and unwanted sexual content. Henna Virkkunen called non-consensual sexual deepfakes "a violent, unacceptable form of degradation," questioning if X treated users' rights as collateral damage. *—PTI*

# Amid US threat, Canada says no China trade deal

## Trump says Carney is 'virtue signalling' to globalist allies

**TORONTO, 25 JAN**

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Sunday that his country has no intention of pursuing a free trade deal with China.

Carney's statements clarify that his recent agreement with China only cut tariffs in a few affected sectors.

Carney was responding to US President Donald Trump's threat from Saturday to impose 100 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods imported into the United States if Canada were to go ahead with a major trade deal with China.

Breaking with the US this month during a visit to China, Carney cut its 100 per cent tariff on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on those Canadian products.

Canadian PM Mark Carney, US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping **PHOTO: WIKI**

Trump had said the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement would be up for renegotiation this summer, adding that he was unclear about Carney's actions.

The Canadian said under the free trade agreement with the US and Mexico, there are commitments not to pursue free trade agreements with non-market economies without prior notification.

Trump described Carney's Beijing visit from earlier this month as "virtue signalling" to globalist allies.

Amid an escalating war of words with Carney as Trump continues the push to acquire Greenland, which has strained the NATO alliance.

Speaking at the Word Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland before Trump, Carney said that Canada has emerged as a leader of a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the US under Trump.

Trump's push to acquire Greenland follows repeated jabs at Canada's sovereignty, even suggesting it becomes the 51st US state. *—PTI*

A viral video of Alex Pretti shows over 6 masked ICE agents pummeling on him before shooting him to dead **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

# Don defends shooting by ICE

**MINNEAPOLIS/ WASHINGTON, 25 JAN**

US President Donald Trump on Monday defended federal ICE agents over the killing in Minnesota, Alex Pretti on Saturday. Trump questioned why Pretti was carrying a firearm during the protest.

While the Trump administration claims that ICE agents were acting in self-defence against an allegedly "violent" Pretti. At least five videos of counter many of the administration's statements.

In the videos, Pretti is seen with only a phone in his hand. None of the footage appears to show him with a weapon. Agents opened fire after discovering he was carrying a handgun. Pretti held a concealed-carry permit.

Former President Barack Obama said on the incident, "This has to stop. I would hope the administration will reconsider their approach and find ways to work constructively with Governor Walz and Mayor Frey to avert more chaos".

However, Trump moved the blame onto Gov. Tim Walz, Mayor Frey, for inciting "Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric."

Trump has refused to back down from his hard-line deportation crackdown and has deployed immigration officers to Democratic-led "sanctuary" cities.

Trump urged Congress to ban sanctuary cities amid outrage that could deepen a standoff over immigration funding that could lead to a partial government shutdown. *—PTI*

# Military-backed party wins Myanmar election

**BANGKOK, 26 JAN**

Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party claimed on Monday that it had won the country's first election held since the 2021 army seize.

The victory of the party led by a former general was widely expected as the election barred opposition parties. Around 25 per cent of parliament seats were reserved for the military, guaranteeing control by the armed forces.

Critics say the polls organised by the military government were neither free nor fair, but an effort to legitimise its rule after seizing power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Officials set up polling station for general election in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Of the country's total 330 townships, 67 areas controlled by armed opposing groups did not participate. Reducing the 664 seats to 586.

Tom Andrews, working with the UN human rights office, urged the international community to reject the election results. *— PTI*

# US security deal for Ukraine 100% ready, says Zelenskyy

**VILNIUS, 26 JAN**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a US security guarantees agreement for Ukraine is "100% ready" following talks with Ukrainian, US and Russian.

Speaking in Vilnius during a visit to Lithuania, Zelenskyy said Kyiv is awaiting a signing date, after which the document would be sent to the US Congress and Ukraine's parliament for ratification. He also reiterated Ukraine's goal of securing European Union membership by 2027, calling it an "economic security guarantee".

Zelenskyy described the Abu Dhabi talks as a rare trilateral format that included military officials, aimed at ending Russia's nearly four-year invasion. He said major differences remain, particularly over territory.

"Our position regarding our territory — Ukraine's territorial integrity — must be respected," he said.

Russia has demanded Ukrainian troop withdrawals from occupied eastern regions. Zelenskyy said Washington is seeking compromise, but warned all sides must be prepared. Negotiators will return to the UAE. *—PTI*

# US used 'secret weapon' to nab Maduro: Don

**WASHINGTON DC, 26 JAN**

US President Donald Trump claimed the US used a secret weapon while capturing Nicolás Maduro from Venezuela, while renewing threats of expanded military strikes against drug cartels.

In an interview with the New York Post, Trump said the weapon, which he called "The Discombobulator", prevented Venezuelan forces from firing Russian and Chinese rockets. "They pressed buttons and nothing worked," he said, adding that he was "not allowed to talk about it".

Trump previously said the operation had turned off "almost all of the lights in Caracas", without explaining how. He also warned that US military action against drug cartels could extend beyond South America. "We know their routes… We're going to hit the cartels," he said, Strikes "could be anywhere", including Mexico, he said

On Friday, the US carried out a strike on an alleged drug-trafficking boat in the eastern Pacific, the first since Maduro's capture. It was at least the 36th such strike since early September, with at least 117 people killed.

Trump said the US had seized seven Venezuelan oil tankers. "We take the oil," he said. Details of the claims remain unverified. *—PTI*

# Israel recovers last Gaza hostage's remains for key ceasefire phase

**NAHARIYA, 26 JAN**

Israel's military said on Monday that the remains of the final hostage held in Gaza had been recovered.

Now clearing the way for the next phase of the ceasefire that paused the Israel-Hamas war. The military said the remains of Ran Gvili were found and identified, a day after the government announced a "large-scale operation" in a northern Gaza cemetery to locate them.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it "an incredible achievement", saying: "I promised we would bring everyone home and we have brought everyone home."

He said Gvili was among the first taken into Gaza during the Hamas-led attack on 7 October, 2023, which has sparked the war.

Ran Gvili **PHOTO: X**

The return of all remaining hostages has been central to the first phase of the ceasefire. Gvili's family had urged Israel not to move to the second phase until his remains were returned.

Netanyahu's office said Israel would open the Rafah crossing with Egypt once the search was completed. Israel and Hamas have faced pressure from US-backed mediators to advance the truce, which began on 10 October.

Israel accused Hamas of delaying recovery efforts, while Hamas said it provided all information available.

**2 PALESTINIANS KILLED**

Israeli forces on Monday fatally shot two Palestinian men near the search area, according to hospitals. Gaza's Health Ministry said more than 480 Palestinians have been killed since 10 Oct. Separately, Israel's Supreme Court considered a petition by the Foreign Press Association seeking independent journalist access to Gaza, with a ruling expected soon. *—PTI*

## Xi removes top Chinese military leaders in major purge

**HONG KONG, 26 JAN**

China's President and Chairman of CMC Xi Jinping caused waves by arresting top military leader, Gen Zhang Youxia, and Gen Liu Zhenli, Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Department. These arrests highlight Xi's campaign to "cleanse the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and to instill maximum fear.

The Central Military Commission (CMC) now has just two members—Xi and General Zhang Shengmin—making a "mockery of the commission's framework." State media claimed the pair "severely trampled and undermined the chairman of the CMC responsibility system" and "fostered political and corruption problems."

Speculation persists on the true cause. Analyst Joaquin Camarena believes Zhang was removed because his "power-base was viewed by Xi as an obstacle." Others suggest Xi is "just really bad at this and purges anyone he thinks isn't doing a good job."

Dr Brahma Chellaney warned that Xi, a "paranoid leader surrounded by sycophants," is mirroring Stalin's pre-war purges. This discontinuity leaves the PLA a "hollow force" as it approaches its 2027 centenary goals. *—ANI*

## RUSSIAN STRIKES LEAVE 1,330 KYIV BUILDINGS WITHOUT HEAT: MAYOR

A paramedic gives first aid to resident injured in a Russian airstrike in Kharkiv on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

More than 1,300 apartment buildings in Kyiv remained without heating after a Russian missile and drone strike, Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said Sunday. Utility crews restored heat to about 2,000 buildings, reducing the total affected to 1,330. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia continues targeting energy infrastructure amid winter cold, warning of severe humanitarian impact during intensified attacks nationwide, officials said Sunday. *—Agencies*

# Hundreds rescued from deadly Philippines ferry disaster

**MANILA, 26 JAN**

A ferry with over 350 people on board sank on Monday near an island in the Philippines. Rescuers saved 316 passengers while at least 18 have died, officials said.

The inter-island cargo and passenger ferry, was sailing from Zamboanga to Jolo in Sulu with 332 passengers and 27 crew when it encountered technical problems and sank after midnight, coast guard.

The ferry went down in good weather near Baluk-baluk village in Basilan, said a coast guard Commander.

"There was a coast guard safety officer on board, and he was the first to call and alert us," Dua said, adding that the officer survived. *—PTI*

Coast Guard personnel tending to injured aboard the Kerstin 3 on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

## Pakistan moves to privatise Islamabad airport after UAE exit

**ISLAMABAD, 26 JAN**

Pakistan has moved ahead with plans to privatise Islamabad International Airport after scrapping a proposed outsourcing deal with the United Arab Emirates, which failed to nominate an operator and reportedly lost interest.

Sources said repeated delays by UAE led Islamabad to seek final confirmation, but the UAE declined to name an operator, prompting the airport's addition to the active privatisation list alongside Karachi and Lahore airports.

The three airports will be offered to private investors to improve efficiency, upgrade infrastructure and boost revenue. Discussions have been held with potential investors from the UAE, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Privatisation Commission rejected reports that Pakistan cancelled a lease deal with the UAE. *—Agencies*

**ART GETS POLITICAL**

# *Iran mural warns retaliation if US strikes*

**DUBAI, 26 JAN 26**

In a direct warning against a US military strike threat, Iranian authorities unveiled a new billboard mural in central Tehran on Sunday, as US warships head to the region.

The mural was unveiled in Tehran's Enghelab Square as the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and accompanying warships moved toward the region. The square, often used for state-backed gatherings, features murals tied to national events.

The artwork depicts a damaged aircraft carrier littered with bodies and wrecked fighter jets, with blood trailing into the water, resembling the US flag, beneath the slogan: "If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind."

Tensions between the US and Iran have spiked following nationwide protests in which thousands were killed and tens of thousands arrested. US President Donald Trump's threat of military action if Iran continues to kill peaceful protesters lingers, saying naval assets are being moved "just in case" he decides to take action.

The IRGC has unveiled a new mural in Tehran's Enqelab Square portraying strikes on a US aircraft carrier **PHOTO: X**

- The mural was unveiled in Tehran's Enghelab Square amid reports that the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and accompanying warships are moving towards the region.

US Central Command confirmed that its Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle has a presence in the Middle East, noting the fighter jet "enhances combat readiness and promotes regional security and stability."

Similarly, the UK Ministry of Defense said Thursday that it deployed its Typhoon fighter jets to Qatar "in a defensive capacity."

On Saturday, the commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard warned that his force is "more ready than ever, finger on the trigger." *—PTI*

# US snowstorm disrupts flights and power supply

**WASHINGTON DC, 26 JAN**

The snowstorm has resulted in a weather emergency for over 190 million Americans across the mid-Atlantic and South. Nearly 1 million homes have been left without power.

The storm has left at least 18 dead, including hypothermia cases in Louisiana, Texas, and New York City.

The frigid cold will linger into the week, and the outages could last for days in places including Nashville and Mississippi, reports CNN.

It further noted that Sunday was the worst day for flight cancellations since the pandemic, as over 17,000 flights were cancelled.

As per the National Weather Service Aviation Weather Centre, delays in aviation could continue to Monday.

**PRIVATE JET WITH 8 ABOARD CRASHES**

A private aircraft carrying eight people crashed on take-off Sunday night at Maine's Bangor International Airport. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) confirmed 7 dead.

Emergency has been declared for over 190M Americans **PHOTO: PTI**

The Bombardier Challenger 600 crashed around 7.45 pm. FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating.

The crash occurred as New England and much of the country grappled with a massive winter storm. Bangor had undergone steady snowfall on Sunday, along with several other states in the country. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

## PVR INOX sells 4700BC to Marico for ₹226.8 cr

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Leading multiplex operator PVR INOX on Monday said it has sold its premium snacking business operating under the 4700BC brand to FMCG major Marico in an all-cash deal worth Rs 226.8 crore. The board approved divesting its 93.27 per cent stake in Zea Maize Pvt Ltd, which owns the brand. "PVR INOX has monetised its entire investment in its subsidiary ZMPL," a joint statement said. The company said the divestment of the non-core asset will strengthen its balance sheet and will be accretive to profit and cash flow. Managing Director Ajay Bijli said the brand is well positioned under Marico. Marico MD Saugata Gupta said, the investment aligns with Marico's ambition."*—PTI*

## Asia's largest civil aviation event to be held in Hyd

**HYDERABAD, 26 JAN**

India's rapidly expanding civil aviation sector will be in focus at Wings India 2026, Asia's largest civil aviation event, to be held from 28 to 31 January at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad. The four-day event will be launched by Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu. It will feature exhibitions, aircraft displays, flying shows, a global conference, CEO forums, B2B and B2G meetings, a job fair and awards. India's aviation sector has seen multi-fold passenger growth, record aircraft orders, expanding MRO, training, cargo and sustainable aviation initiatives. Delegations from 20 countries will attend. Major global and Indian aviation companies have confirmed participation. Over 150 exhibitors, 7,500 business visitors are expected at the event.*—ANI*

## 'Govt's tax collections remain weak in FY26'

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

The Centre's tax collections have remained weak so far in FY26, with growth significantly lower than Budgeted estimatesaccording to a report by CareEdge Ratings. The report noted that gross tax collections have grown by just 3.3 per cent year-on-year during the first eight months of FY26, much lower than the Budgeted growth of 12.5 per cent. Corporate tax collections grew by 7.8 per cent compared to the Budgeted growth of 9.7 per cent, while income tax collections rose by 6.8 per cent, far below the Budgeted growth of 21.6 per cent. But IT and corporate tax collections showed some improvement in recent months. *—ANI*

## Indigo cancels flights to 4 Iran cities till 28 Jan

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

IndiGo has cancelled its flights to Tbilisi, Almaty, Tashkent and Baku till 28 January due to the prevailing situation in Iran. "We remain vigilant to developments in the region around Iran and are proactively reviewing flight operations, with safety being our highest priority," the airline said in a post on X. In view of the prevailing situation and after careful assessment, IndiGo said it was cancelling flights to and from Tbilisi (Georgia), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Baku (Azerbaijan) on 26, 27, and 28 January.For these destinations, the airline flies over the Iranian airspace and due to the current situation, it is avoiding that airspace, an official said.The duration of flights from India to these cities is in the range of six to seven hours. *—PTI*

# India, EU set to sign FTA, defence partnership

### Indian firms can join EU's €150 bn defence programme

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India and the European Union are set to announce a defence framework pact and a strategic agenda with an free trade agreement (FTA) on 27 January.

The proposed Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) will deepen defence and security cooperation, enhance interoperability, and open avenues for Indian firms to participate in the EU's SAFE (Security Action for Europe) programme, a euro 150 billion fund supporting defence readiness.

Negotiations on a Security of Information Agreement (SOIA) are also expected, boosting industrial defence collaboration.

The summit is likely to witness a memorandum on facilitating mobility of Indian workers to Europe, building on partnerships with France, Germany, Italy a

nd other EU nations. Discussions will also cover global challenges, including Russia's war in Ukraine.

While the Free Trade Agreement will slash Indian tariffs on EU cars to 40 per cent, sensitive sectors, including agriculture and dairy, remain protected. Services sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, accounting and auditing will see eased norms. India and the EU are also negotiating investment protection and Geographical Indications agreements.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU reached USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25, with exports of USD 75.85 billion and imports of USD 60.68 billion, giving a trade surplus of USD 15.17 billion. The EU accounts for 17 per cent of India's total exports and 9 per cent of EU shipments, making it India's largest goods trading partner. The services trade in 2024 was USD 83.10 billion.

Officials said while differences remain on certain issues, both sides share core interests in ensuring a stable international order.

The agreements are expected to create opportunities for Indian manufacturers, particularly in the automobile and labour-intensive sectors, and deepen strategic and economic cooperation between the two partners. *—PTI*

The global risk-off environment has prompted aggressive selling by foreign portfolio investors, adding pressure on the rupee **PHOTO: AI**

# Mkts slip over 4% amid rupee's slide

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

India's benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty have fallen over 4 per cent in January, due to foreign fund outflows, a weaker rupee, muted corporate earnings, geopolitical risks and fresh tariff concerns.

Elevated crude oil prices in international markets, alongside rising global bond yields, have further compounded risk aversion as markets navigate an increasingly uncertain global macro and geopolitical landscape.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 3,682.9 points, or 4.32 per cent, and the 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 1,080.95 points, or 4.13 per cent this month.

"The global risk-off environment has prompted aggressive selling by foreign portfolio investors, adding pressure on the rupee, which has slipped to record lows," Ponmudi R, CEO - Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

"Earnings disappointments from select heavyweight stocks across sectors, including IT, banking, and consumption-linked segments dampened investor optimism," Ponmudi added.

The rupee hit a historic low of 92 against the US dollar on 23 January.

According to an Axis Securities report, with global uncertainty, domestic Egrowth resilience, and fiscal discipline all in play, the Union Budget 2026-27 is expected to strike a balance between growth support and macro stability. *—ANI*

# Reliance halts Russian oil purchase, PSU refineries fill in

**BETUL, 26 JAN**

Indian imports of Russian oil dipped slightly to 1.1 million bpd in the first three weeks of January from 1.2 million bpd in December **PHOTO: AI**

Reliance Industries Ltd, India's biggest buyer of Russian crude oil, has not bought any barrels from Kremlin in January so far while state-run refiners have stepped up imports prompted by discounts hitting some USD 7 per barrel, almost triple the level seen in mid-2025.

Reliance, which was touted as the world's biggest buyer of seaborne Russian oil at around 6,00,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2025, did not buy any Russian crude oil in the first three weeks of January, industry sources said, and ship-tracking data showed.

Indian imports of Russian oil dipped slightly to 1.1 million bpd in the first three weeks of January from 1.2 million bpd in December, reflecting the impact of US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, Russia's two biggest oil exporters, that came into effect from 21 November.

A Reliance spokesperson had earlier this month stated that the company did not receive a single Russian cargo in January, while its purchases in December were half those in November.

HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd and HPCL too did not pick up any Russian crude.

However, state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) bought an average of 470,000 bpd, its highest ever, data from maritime intelligence firm Kpler showed. —PTI

**GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

# Customs, TDS reforms on anvil

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her ninth consecutive Budget on 1 February in the Lok Sabha amid expectations of overhaul of customs duty regime and reforms to boost economy.

The Budget is also likely to outline the path of targeting of debt-to-GDP ratio as India's fiscal management focus shifts from managing deficit to lowering of debt.

Individuals, who last year got a big relief in terms of Income Tax exemption limit hike to Rs 12 lakh and GST rate cuts, are hoping for some relief in standard deduction.

With the new and simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, coming into effect from 1 April, the industry expects the Budget to outline transition provisions, rules and FAQ for better understanding.

Some incentives, like hike in standard deduction, are expected that offers low tax rates but no exemptions.

There is hope for rationalisation of TDS categories into fewer rates, slabs.

Overhaul of customs regime may include fewer rates, amnesty scheme to unlock Rs 1.53 lakh crore stuck in disputes.

Higher allocations are expected for defence expenditure in view of rising geopolitical tensions. Cost of central schemes to be shared between the Centre and states in 60:40 ratio. Devolution of taxes to the states is expected. *—PTI*

## India needs culturally rooted AI: EY India

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

As India accelerates its quest for sovereign AI, the nation must release government-held data to counter the western standpoint of current global models, EY's Rajnish Gupta said.

Ahead of the Union Budget, Gupta urged the government to make vast amounts of public data available to local developers to ensure India builds AI that reflects its own identity.

Gupta, partner, Tax and Economic Policy Group, EY India, warned that today's most popular large language models (LLMs) are fundamentally biased because they are trained primarily on US and European data.

To ensure India builds the next generation of AI that is culturally and linguistically relevant, the government must act as a primary data provider.

Gupta noted that India's unique cultural nuances, diverse languages, and religious complexities are often misunderstood or ignored by global models.

While public investment shouldn't necessarily dictate innovation, it is essential for creating the foundation. *—ANI*

# PSU bank strike today over 5-day work week

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Public sector banking operations across India are likely to be impacted on Tuesday as the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), representing nine unions, has decided to proceed with a nationwide strike demanding the immediate implementation of a five-day work week. The strike follows a failed conciliation meeting with the chief labour commissioner on 23 January. Banks were closed on 25 and 26 January so branch services will be disrupted for three days. AIBEA General Secretary CH Venkatachalam stated, "Despite detailed discussions, there was no assurance on our demand. Hence, we have been compelled to proceed with the strike." Services such as deposits, withdrawals, and cheque clearances at public sector banks, including SBI, PNB, and Bank of Baroda, are expected to be affected. Digital banking will continue, but ATM cash availability might face local delays. The unions demand all Saturdays as holidays- *—PTI*

# More Boeing Dreamliners for India

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

US aircraft maker Boeing expects more orders for its Dreamliners in the Indian market, which is poised for substantial growth in the coming years, a senior company executive has said

Amid the ongoing tariff issues between India and the US, Boeing India and South Asia President Salil Gupte emphasised on the two countries' goal for industrialisation of Indian aerospace and exuded confidence that the aircraft maker will be able to see through some of these short-term challenges.

In India, Boeing 787 planes, also known as Dreamliners, are operated by Air India. The airline's first custom-made Dreamliner post privatisation in January 2022 is set to commence commercial operations from 1 February.

Air India has 33 Dreamliners in its fleet -- 26 legacy B787-8s, six B787-9s from Vistara.

On June 12 last year, an Air India Dreamliner operating the flight AI171 from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick crashed soon after take off, killing 260 people and it was also the first fatal accident involving the Dreamliner. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is probing the crash. For Boeing the year came a challenge.*—PTI*

**2025 NSE REPORT**

# *Under 30 account for 55.9% new investors*

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Alongside youth participation, there has been an steady rise in female investors in the market **PHOTO: NES**

Young investors continued to play a dominant role in India's equity markets in 2025, even as the pace of new investor additions showed signs of moderation after the post-pandemic surge, according to a report by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

The report highlighted that out of every 100 new investors added during 2025, nearly 56 investors were below the age of 30, which showed the sustained participation of youth in the equity markets.

Investors aged 30 and below contributed around 55.9 per cent of incremental registrations during the year, compared with 54.2 per cent in 2024, when new investor registrations were at their peak.

Despite this continued inflow of young investors, the report noted that the overall onboarding of new investors has eased compared to the sharp rise seen in the years following the pandemic. Even so, India's investor base has remained structurally young through 2025.

By the end of 2025, investors aged 30 years and below accounted for approximately 38.7 per cent of the total registered investor base, a sharp increase from around 22.7 per cent in 2018.

The marginal decline in the share of investors below 30 Ayears of age points to a gradual normalisation after the post-pandemic surge, the report noted.

This trend also indicates a subtle shift towards a more balanced investor base as participation broadens across age groups.

Alongside youth participation, the report highlighted a steady rise in female investor participation. *—ANI*

- NSE study in 2025 highlighted that out of every 100 new investors added, nearly 56 investors were below the age of 30, which showed the sustained participation of youth in the equity markets.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

## Sun, Cipla recall products in US over quality issue

**NEW DELHI, 26 JAN**

Drugmakers Sun Pharma and Cipla are recalling products in the US due to manufacturing-related issues, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) said.

The US arm of Mumbai-based Sun Pharma is recalling over 26,000 bottles of a generic medication for dandruff and skin conditions with inflammation and itching. Princeton-based Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Inc is recalling 24,624 bottles of Fluocinolone Acetonide Topical Solution for "Failed Impurities/ Degradation Specifications." The Class III nationwide recall was initiated on 30 December, 2025.

The company is also recalling certain batches of Clindamycin Phosphate USP to treat acne vulgaris due to "Failed Impurities/ Degradation: Out of Specification results for Total Impurities and for Assay," initiated on 26 November, 2025.

The USFDA said Class III recalls indicate products are unlikely to cause adverse health consequences. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## Nat Sciver-Brunt scores first century in WPL history

VADODARA, 26 JAN

Nat Sciver-Brunt ended the long wait for a first WPL centurion, scoring a hundred for the Mumbai Indians against Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara on Monday.The English all-rounder scored a 57-ball ton for MI in a crucial match in the race to the Playoffs. She combined for a 131-run partnership off just 73 balls with opener Hayley Matthews. Mumbai posted a challenging 199/4 at the end of its batting essay.Australian batter Georgia Voll and New Zealand all-rounder Sophie Devine held the previous record for the highest score in WPL history, both falling short of the landmark by one run.—*PTI*

## Don Bradman's cap was sold for $460,000

LONDON, 26 JAN

A "Baggy Green" cap worn by Don Bradman during a series against India in 1947-48 was sold for $460,000 at a Gold Coast auction on Monday, fetching the highest price for a cap sported by the great Australian batsman. Bradman had gifted it to Indian cricketer Sriranga Wasudev Sohoni, whose family preserved it for the last 75 years. "That's over three generations under lock and key. If you were a family member, you were only allowed to look at it when you were 16 years old for five minutes," said Lee Hames, the chief operating officer of Lloyds Auctioneers and Valu ers.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## Devdutt Padikkal, named captain for K'taka's Ranji Trophy

BENGALURU, 26 JAN

India international K.L. Rahul has been named in Karnataka's squad for the upcoming Ranji Trophy fixture against Punjab, to be played in Mohali from 29 January. Rahul's inclusion bolsters a Karnataka side that will be led by Devdutt Padikkal. The squad also features fast bowler Prasidh Krishna, adding further firepower to the pace attack. Veteran batter Karun Nair has been ruled out of the fixture, dealing a blow to Karnataka's middle-order experience. The match assumes added significance with Group B locked in a four-way race for two knockout spots. Karnataka, meanwhile, will be desperate for a win after suffering a 217-run defeat to Madhya Pradesh in Alur in their last outing. —*PTI*

## Kerala Blasters signs French forward Kevin Yoke

T'PURAM, 26 JAN

Kerala Blasters FC has signed French winger Kévin Yoke for Indian Super League (ISL) 2025-26 on a free transfer, the club announced on Monday.Yoke adds to the club's recent incomings after announcement of the league's starting date. i.e., 14 February. The club had earlier announced the signing of German attacking midfielder Marlon Roos Trujillo.Yoke, with a frame of 182 cm, is a two-footed forward and joins the Blasters after spending three seasons in Greece, where he played across the top two divisions, scoring thrice and assisting 11 times."Kevin is a player with qualities that suit the way we want to play.—*PTI*

# Djokovic's stand-in Shelton overhauls Ruud

### Heatwave warning in Melbourne triggers postponements

MELBOURNE, 26 JAN

A fired-up Ben Shelton took top billing from the absent Novak Djokovic and reached his third Australian Open quarter-final with a 3-6 6-4 6-3 6-4 win over Casper Ruud on Monday.

Djokovic was a shoo-in for the late-night slot at Rod Laver Arena but ended up a walkover into the quarter-finals when his opponent, Jakub Mensik, withdrew injured from their fourth-round match.

Ben Shelton *PHOTO: AO*

Fans missing 10-times Australian Open champion Djokovic punctured the air with cries of "Go Novak!" during the match -- but Shelton took it with good humour."For me, atmosphere is everything. So I want to thank you guys for staying out here," the eighth seed said on court."I know you guys were probably looking forward to Novak tonight.

Shelton may need to channel Djokovic circa 2023 to take down Sinner, having lost eight consecutive matches to the Italian, including in last year's semi-finals at Melbourne Park.

Australian Open organisers urged fans to drink plenty of water and stay in the shade as the tournament braces for a freak heatwave on Tuesday with temperatures set to soar as high as **45C**.

The extreme weather has forced the Grand Slam wheelchair championships to be postponed for 24 hours, with doubles and juniors action on outside courts also likely to be impacted.

The tournament has a Heat Stress Scale of 1-5, with fivebeing the highest.

**Pegula knocks 2025 champion Madison Keys**

Jessica Pegula knocked podcast pal and defending champion Madison Keys out of the Australian Open on Monday and moved into a quarterfinal against Amanda Anisimova, another all-American match. Their fourth-round wins on Day 9 meant four Americans reached the women's singles quarterfinals in Australia for the first time since 2001, when Serena and Venus Williams, Jennifer Capriati, Monica Seles, and Lindsay Davenport made it to the last 8.

"Sucks that one American has to go out in the quarterfinals," Anisimova said.

**Taylor Fritz struggles with injury**

Taylor Fritz's Australian Open ended in a grueling physical struggle on Monday as he was beaten 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 by fifth-seeded Lorenzo Musetti. While it marked a milestone for Musetti, for the No. 9-seeded Fritz, the fourth-round match signalled that his body may have reached its limit.

The 2024 U.S. Open runner-up revealed in a post-match news conference that he had arrived in Melbourne in two minds about his fitness, and had nearly withdrawn because of knee and abdominal issues. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

# DC aim for a strong showing against Gujarat Giants

VADODARA, 26 JAN

Delhi Capitals will ride the momentum of their big win over table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru and bank on their strong bowling line-up to deliver when they face Gujarat Giants on Tuesday, with the business end of the Women's Premier League fast approaching.

Delhi Capitals, the most consistent side in the WPL after reaching all three finals but finishing runners-up each time, made a telling statement in their last outing by handing Smriti Mandhana-led Royal Challengers Bengaluru their first defeat of the season.

The comprehensive seven-wicket win not only kept them in contention for the playoffs but also lifted them to second spot on the WPL points table.

DC, led by star Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues, didn't have the best start to the season, but their consistency has emerged as the campaign has progressed. South African batting stalwarts Laura Wolvaardt and Lizelle Lee have provided solidity at the top, although ace opener Shafali Verma's patchy form has persisted.

Jemimah will be heartened by the wealth of bowling options at her disposal. Dismissing a strong RCB batting line-up for just over 100 runs in their previous game was a masterclass from her bowlers, particularly young pacer Nandani Sharma, veteran South African quick Marizanne Kapp, and left-arm spinner Shree Charani, who is rapidly emerging as a specialist in containing runs. Charani, however, will have her work cut out against a Gujarat Giants side that hammered her for 42 runs in their earlier clash this season, going on to post a massive 200-plus total and narrowly defeating Delhi Capitals by four runs. The match starts at 7:30 pm. —*PTI*

RETURNS TO ELITE GROUP

# Ranji Trophy: Bihar crushes Manipur by 568 runs

PATNA, 26 JAN

Bihar capitalised on opener Piyush Singh's magnificent second-innings double century and incisive bowling spells from Suraj Kashyap and Himanshu Singh to hammer Manipur by a massive 568 runs in the Plate final, sealing a triumphant return to the Ranji Trophy Elite Group on Monday.

Bihar, whose Ranji Trophy journey has been marked by turbulence, had briefly broken into the Elite Group in the 2022-23 season before slipping back to the Plate Group in 2024-25.

Now restored to the top tier, they are pressing ahead with a rebuilding phase under skipper Sakibul Gani, anchored by the promise of teenage batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi.

On Monday, Bihar set Manipur an improbable target of 764 after Raghuvendra Pratap Singh fell agonisingly short of a century, dismissed for his overnight score of 90, prompting the declaration of the second innings at 505 for 6.

Bihar, who had scored 522 in the first innings and then dismissed Manipur for 264, got rid of their opponents for 195 in the second essay, with spinners Suraj Kumar Kashyap (3/32) and Himanshu Singh (3/49) taking three wickets each on the fifth and final day. —*PTI*

# BCB reinstates Nazmul amid cricketing chaos

DHAKA, 26 JAN

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has reinstated director M Nazmul Islam as finance committee chairman, according to The Daily Star. The development comes after the International Cricket Council (ICC) replaced Bangladesh with Scotland for the upcoming T20 Men's World Cup 2026, which starts on 7 February.

"We had given our observation to the board, and the board made the call," BCB disciplinary committee chairman Faiazur Rahman informed The Daily Star. Earlier, on January 18, Nazmul replied to the board's show-cause notice a day after the deadline.

The BCB disciplinary committee had previously found his reply to be positive and satisfactory but did not divulge its contents, according to The Daily Star.

Earlier, BCB Media Committee Chairman Amzad Hussain confirmed that the board will not challenge the ICC decision to replace them with Scotland in the T20 World Cup 2026.

Amzad Hussain announced a board meeting in Dhaka on Saturday. The news comes after reports stated that the BCB had requested the ICC's dispute resolution committee to look into the matter, but Hussain cleared the air, stating that no such measures had been taken. —*PTI*

## GUKESH BOUNCES BACK WITH A WIN AGAINST FEDOSEEV

WIJK AAN ZEE, 26 JAN

World Champion D Gukesh bounced back after two back-to-back losses and put it across Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia in the eighth round of the Tata Steel Masters here Monday.

Gukesh won handsomely with black pieces, which should do a world of good to his confidence.The Indian ace had been playing well till the first rest day, and then lost two games in a row and finally pulled one back.

It was a picturesque finish when Gukesh put his rook emprise and finished the game in 41 moves.On a day when Arjun Erigaisi survived a difficult position against compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram and settled for a draw, R Praggnanandhaa escaped in a pawn down endgame to hold youngster Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey.

Meanwhile, local favourite Anish Giri threw the tournament open with a fine victory against overnight leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.Abdusattarov remained in sole lead on 5.5 points despite the loss as his nearest rival and compatriot Javokhir Sindarov was held to a draw by Vincent Keymer of Germany. The day produced just two decisive games out of a possible seven in the 14-player field, which meant that 14-year-old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey remained in the joint third spot with Niemann of the United States and Jorden van Foreest of the Netherlands. —*PTI*

# Sheikh Joaan elected to lead Asia's OCA

TASHKENT, 26 JAN

Qatar scored a win in Olympic politics Monday, with the emirate also aiming to host the 2036 Summer Games.

Olympic Council of Asia members elected Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani as their president to complete the term in office of Randir Singh of India, who stepped down for health reasons.

Sheikh Joaan was the only candidate nominated and received 44 votes, with one OCA member abstaining, at the Olympic body's annual assembly. His term runs to 2028.

"I stand before you today with feelings of great pride and responsibility," the sheikh said in an acceptance speech. He also leads the Qatar Olympic Committee and is senior vice president of the global group of national Olympic bodies, known as ANOC. Sheikh Joaan is the younger brother of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who has been a member of the International Olympic Committee for 24 years. —*PTI*

# PAK DELAYS DECISION ON PARTICIPATION IN T20 WC

LAHORE, 26 JAN

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will take a final call on participating in the men's T20 World Cup either on Friday or next Monday, chairman Mohsin Naqvi said after meeting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Monday.

Naqvi took to social media to confirm that the issue was discussed at length during his meeting on Monday with the Prime Minister.

"I had a productive meeting with the Prime Minister and briefed him on the ICC matter. He directed that we resolve it while keeping all options on the table," Naqvi tweeted.

"It was agreed that the final decision will be taken either on Friday or next Monday," he added.

According to sources, Prime Minister Sharif told Naqvi that Pakistan should extend all possible support to Bangladesh, who were recently ousted from the tournament starting 7 February.

The sources said the Prime Minister was briefed on multiple scenarios, including the possibility of Pakistan not sending its team for the World Cup, or participating in the tournament but boycotting the high-profile match against India scheduled for February 15, if that course of action helped Bangladesh cricket in any manner.

The PCB had earlier maintained that the government would take the final call on Pakistan's participation in the event in view of the evolving situation following Bangladesh's exit from the competition. —*PTI*

INDERJIT SINGH BINDRA IS DEAD

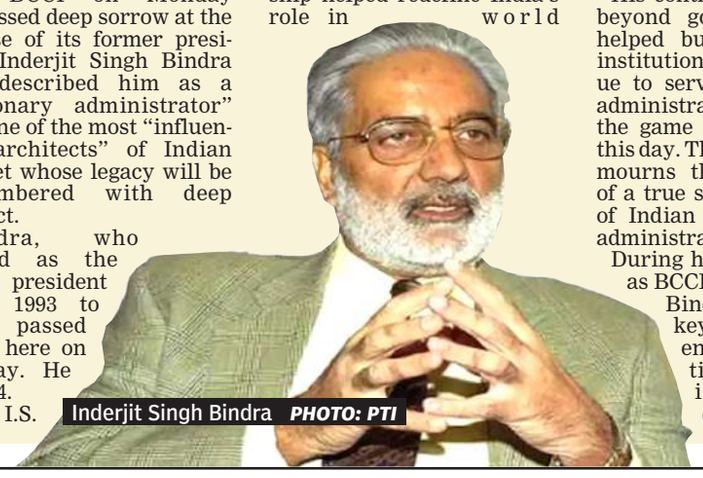
# *BCCI mourns former cricket president*

NEW DELHI, 26 JAN

The BCCI on Monday expressed deep sorrow at the demise of its former president Inderjit Singh Bindra and described him as a "visionary administrator" and one of the most "influential architects" of Indian cricket whose legacy will be remembered with deep respect.

Bindra, who served as the board president from 1993 to 1996, passed away here on Sunday. He was 84.

"Mr I.S. Bindra was a visionary administrator whose leadership helped redefine India's role in world cricket," BCCI President Mithun Manhas said.



Inderjit Singh Bindra *PHOTO: PTI*

His contributions went far beyond governance as he helped build systems and institutions that continue to serve players, administrators, and the game itself to this day. The BCCI mourns the loss of a true stalwart of Indian cricket administration."

During his tenure as BCCI president, Bindra played a key role in strengthening India's position within the international cricketing fraternity.

He was also a long-serving president of the Punjab Cricket Association from 1978 to 2014. In recognition of his enduring contribution, the PCA Stadium in Mohali was renamed the I.S. Bindra Stadium in 2015 in his honour.

"As former President of the PCA and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment left an indelible mark on the game," PCA president Amarjit Singh Mehta said. —*PTI*

# PGTI's 72 The League welcomes Rajasthan team

NEW DELHI, 26 JAN

The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) on Monday announced a new Rajasthan-based franchise for its flagship '72 The League', which is scheduled to begin on 21 February.

The franchise is jointly owned by Haldiram Snacks Food Pvt. Ltd. and KLJ Group of Companies. The inaugural edition of the League, jointly launched by PGTI and Game of Life Sports (GOLS), will be held at three of Delhi-NCR's most prestigious golf venues: Classic Golf & Country Club, Jaypee Greens, and Qutab Golf Course. The league will feature city-based franchises, each comprising 10 professional players, selected through a transparent player auction. Leading golfers from the PGTI circuit will participate, creating one of the largest competitive platforms Indian professional golf has ever seen.

"It is wonderful to have Haldiram & KLJ join PGTI's 72 The League, adding a new dimension to the competition," Kapil Dev said in a release.

"This team is sure to spark excitement and pride among golf enthusiasts across the state of Rajasthan, and I wish them all the best." —*PTI*